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web 2.0

1x57

POSTED ON OCTOBER 6, 2010 - BY AMY SENGER

## AND THE GEEKS SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH: THE NEW WORLD ORDER

BUSINESS

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It was a quintessential David and Goliath scene: not one but two classically handsome twin brothers, resplendent with classic Aryan features, 6'5" athletic statures and a fittingly WASPy-sounding last name towering above the scrawny nerdy-looking Jewish kid wearing a Gap hoodie. Except the two Goliaths were asking David for programming help.

The phenomenon known as “**The Facebook Movie**” is just one of the symbolic dominoes falling in a series of events that all point in the direction of a seismic shift in power dynamics of our culture. Move over jocks, brawn is now measured by keystrokes.

Justin Timberlake playing Sean Parker in a major Hollywood film is as a big of a deal as Google engaging in diplomacy talks with China, controversy arising over group of Silicon Valley VC's having a “**secret**” meeting in a private room of San Francisco wine bar, and a Kansas-based mutual fund company using a **computer algorithm** that ends up bringing down the entire stock market. We're not talking about Wall Street or Washington, DC or even LA. Silicon Valley, a metonym for American high-tech, represents the new paradigm of living, where our online activities are just as real as our “**IRL**” activities. And they're just as powerful, if not more.

All of it rings with a tenor of ironic charm. Like the kid in high school, the one scrawnier than the rest, wearing glasses, eating alone at the lunch table, and getting picked on mercilessly by a student body that values everything he is not – that kid can bring down your server, hack into your accounts, and basically wreak havoc on your life. That kid is the next Mark Zuckerberg and belongs to an imposing consortium of humans – the technology geekhood.

The pioneers and architects of our online world are the gatekeepers and keyholders of our real life world. One can imagine a future in which the most prestigious clubs in the world are not predicated on family pedigree, social charm, athletic prowess or even basic good looks or wealth, but the ability to “get root access to a Python webserver, expose its SSL encryption and intercept all traffic over its secure port” – all while doing shots.

So the question is not whether the geeks will inherit the earth but rather now that the day has come, what does our future look like? Once we're all connected, networked and dialed-in, does humanity fare for the better or for the worse? Will the geeks blow their inheritance or build a better world?

POSTED ON JULY 30, 2010 - BY AMY SENGER

## THE DNI: NOT AN UNTENABLE SITUATION

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Soon, the United States will have a new Director of National Intelligence and while I wouldn't want the position myself, it's a situation that begs the question, “How can we win here – how can we succeed?” I say we as American citizens and taxpayers, but more specifically we as a former member of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) who spent over a year promoting information sharing at Liberty Crossing.

At first glance, the position of DNI (and the office) is a losing battle. A fait accompli. Bottom line: it suffers from a lack of organizational authority over the Intelligence Community, which remains split by the DOD, where the **Military Intelligence Program (MIP)** (which includes NSA, NRO, NSA – the eyes and ears of the IC) is directed and controlled by the Secretary of

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Defense. As long intelligence programs continue to be authorized and funded by defense authorization legislation, the authority of the DNI is in theory, not practice. That's one aspect.

There's also a little a agency proceeded by The. Technically, the CIA on the IC org chart reports to the DNI. But this hasn't been the case, mainly because neither the previous POTUS nor the current POTUS has asked it to. While it might be tricky to gauge the success of a "covert" agency, I think the CIA is doing something right. If it wasn't, the Executive Office would be favoring the DNI. But it's not, as seen in the **Chief of Station turf battle** and the **PDB squabble**. Perhaps the DNI hasn't proven it's value to the Executive Office. Or perhaps it's simply human nature to favor the team in which you have more confidence when your own ass is on the line.

Regardless of whose ass is on the line, the main question is: how can the DNI succeed? The easy answer is it can when the President wants it to. Until the President says that the DNI is not just the authoritative agency for the intelligence community but his go-to, the DNI destined to fail. At a recent Palantir Night Live with **Michael Chertoff** (\*disclaimer: Palantir is a client), the former Secretary of Homeland Security commented on the DNI's current state: "You don't grow a tree by pulling it up by the roots every year." Or not giving it the environment and elements it needs to succeed.

Yes, I think the odds are stacked against the DNI. But it's not an untenable situation. There is a way for the DNI to win (aside from legislative reform and a shift in Executive Office backing) and that's technology: information, data, networks, platforms, tools, search, discovery, integration, visualization, analysis. The Google play.

I don't know what James Clapper is aiming to do as DNI, but if he can build off the success of **Intelink** and leverage analytic tools across it, he'll be far ahead of his predecessors. Forget who is delivering the PDB. Focus on delivering information and tools to the base, the people actually working intelligence issues. Get rid of the "consultants" and by consultants I mean \$150-\$300/hr professional-services-white-paper-writing managers with no IT/computer background whose firms front-load their contracts with grandiose promises and hefty price tags. Hire engineers. Hire folks like **Jeff Jonas** and enlist forward-leaning minds like **Michele Weslander Quaid**. And let the engineers sell whatever great innovations they come up with on the government's dime back to the government. Offer a progressive working environment that looks less like a depressing status quo industrial-style grey cube farm and more like Starbucks so 20-somethings who grew up with laptops and coffee shops don't feel like they've entered a sick time-warp joke.

No solution is ever simple. There's always politics and posturing, like battles over where networks and applications reside and who should be paying for what. And the IC network terrain isn't that same as the open internet. And offering IT solutions isn't specifically DNI's charter. But the network is power. Information is power. Access to information is power. If the DNI can continue to dig in the direction of presenting IT solutions to the issue of knowledge sharing in a siloed world where key knowledge holders are resistant to share beyond their agency walls, it can wield a swift undercurrent of power in the IC. Some agencies and players might buck against this but open source information coupled with a composite of inter-IC sources can threaten any individual agency's no-play strategy.

If Clapper's relationship is as strong as Gates makes it out to be, he can take advantage of two key opportunities for the IC: geo-location and the mobile web (which are big plays for NRO, NGA and NSA). In an increasingly geo-located world, location is where it's at. And in an ever-growing mobile web environment, the trend of using text over voice communications could become a big opportunity for the IC for leveraging effective written language translation services.

I'm not naive or ignorant to the challenges of offering IT solutions in a highly bureaucratic world. Even if the *"If you build it, they will come"* mantra holds true, it certainly doesn't mean people will play and stay. However, until the IC operates like the internet (opening agency doors and channels to data and information), I think the DNI is necessary to make sure one agency's mission or agenda doesn't undermine the success of the entire community and offering community IT solutions is the best play.

POSTED ON JULY 13, 2010 - BY **AMY SENGER**

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUCCESS AND FAILURE IS WILL

**BUSINESS**

**LIFE**

Sometimes in life you don't realize the impact of a person or event until you have the experience and perspective to understand it's uniqueness. Few people stand out in my mind as having a positively illuminating impact on my life – I mean truly shine, like a lighthouse in the middle of a vast, dark ocean – and Sue Behringer is one those people.

Sue recently retired after 20 years of serving as Assistant Coach for the Severna Park Varsity Women's Field Hockey team. Severna Park Field Hockey holds the state record for most State Championships, is the toughest team at the school to make, and it's head coach, Lillian Shelton, is responsible for bringing the sport of field hockey to Anne Arundel county in 1975 when she created Severna Park's team, then subsequently led the expansion of the sport throughout county.

Before my first year of high school, I had no substantive knowledge of or experience playing field hockey, even though I grew up a jock. Once I arrived, I quickly learned that field hockey was the most prestigious sport to play. It wasn't football, it wasn't basketball, it wasn't baseball. The field hockey team's level of success and excellence was unparalleled.

For my freshman spring semester gym class, I had the good fortune of having Coach Shelton as my gym teacher. During the indoor field hockey portion of class, Coach Shelton pulled me aside and asked if I had ever played. When I told her no, she convinced me to come out for the junior varsity team in the Fall. Which I did. And I made.

The JV team was headed up by an All-American Division I Field Hockey and Lacrosse player. While she and Coach Shelton had their differences, I flourished under Coach Petersen's coaching and ended the year as the team's leading scorer.

If I wasn't a favorite of Coach Petersen's, I certainly felt and played like I was. Getting the ball in the net seemed like the easiest thing for me to do. Until the next year when I moved up to varsity the next year. On varsity, I was not a favorite of Coach Shelton's. As a junior I didn't start and spent more time on the bench than on the field. I learned to accept this but my senior year, when I wasn't selected as part of the starting line-up, it got to me. It affected my entire game-time playing ability. There were circumstances outside of just me that impacted my game performances, but I think the biggest factor was inside my head. Things I did in practice I could rarely repeat in games and it got progressively worse. The entire regular season passed by and I only scored a handful of goals. I remember one game against a relatively easy team where the ball was right in front of my stick, in front of the goal, and I didn't move. It was like my natural instinct to score had all but vanished.

So there I was sitting on the sideline of a scoreless game at the quarterfinals when a time-out was called with only a few minutes on the clock. Coach Behringer pulled me aside and before sending me in, said:

"You're going to score."

"I want to," I replied.

"Not want to. You will."

Thirty seconds later, I knocked the ball in the goal, and it made a loud, thunderous clang that rang up into the bleachers. The goal sent our team in the semi-finals. The [newspaper write-up](#) of the game didn't do Coach Behringer justice. She knew I could score. I had stopped believing it much earlier on in the season.

I went on to do it again in the semi-finals, only in that game we were down 1-0. I scored with less than 10 minutes on the clock to tie it up and my teammate scored to send us to the State Championships.

In the state championship game, with 3 minutes left, we were down 1-0 but a teammate scored a goal to tie it up which sent us into overtime. But neither team could score. As the time on the clock was winding down to less than 2 minutes, our team was awarded a [penalty stroke](#). Without even looking at the sideline for a cue from the coaches, I walked up to take it. I had no doubts, no nervousness, no awareness of all the people anxiously watching me. It was just me, the ball, and the goal.

I sent the ball sailing into the net. It won the game and won us the championship. But that goal started with the words 'you will.' There's a big difference between saying you want to achieve something and saying you *will* achieve it.

I don't know what would have happened if Sue hadn't had that talk with me on the sideline before sending me in. Maybe I would have scored. Maybe not. I do know this: the people who don't believe, who don't give and show support, who don't have faith, who don't say 'you will' – they're a dime a dozen in this world. The Sue Behringers of the world, however, are the reason championships are won, dynasties are built, and masterpieces are created.

They say in sports, it's all in your head. It's true in sports and it's true in life. The outcome of every endeavor is determined before any action is ever taken. Thanks, Sue, for teaching me one of the most valuable lessons of success and life.



I don't normally write about sex per se at 1x57 but the recent 50th anniversary of the U.S. FDA's approval of "The Pill" stirred up so many thoughts about sexuality, gender, childbearing, relationships, access to information, and the government's role in all of this that I couldn't miss the opportunity to ask questions.

I wouldn't be speaking about this if it hadn't been for an email **Erin Kotecki-Vest** shared that was sent to her in response to the ideas she expressed in a CNN piece – **What 'The Pill' did:**

*Dear Erin Kotecki-Vest,*

*I read your piece on CNN.com and I think I know why you are not in God's favor. HE will take your woman parts because you do NOT obey HIM. You deserve to have much pain in your surgery and to know HIS will.*

*I pray for you*

SG

When I saw this, I couldn't help but think (besides how sad the author is plagued with such ignorance and hatred) we as a society have a long way to go. For someone to show such vitriol over a woman's ability to control reproduction means there is still a prevailing sentiment in our culture that fears women having control. Period.

In the past century, we've experienced tremendous change, both technologically and socially, with regards to reproduction and birth control. At the time of my grandmother's childbearing years, even after giving birth to five children and begging for a tubal ligation, it was still her male physician's decision to determine when she had conceived enough children to warrant the procedure. She would go on to give birth to two more children, almost dying in labor with her last stillborn child.

During the time of my mother's childbearing years, there was an entire generation of girls who "**went away.**" It wasn't talked about then and it's not talked about today but post-World War II and pre-Roe v Wade and the prescribing of birth control pills to unmarried women, approximately 1 out of 4 sexually active American women who got pregnant were shipped off to religion-based "homes," where they were hidden away until they gave birth, then coerced or even forced into giving up their babies for adoption. I can't imagine how painful or difficult this must have been. Nor can I fully appreciate how relatively recent this practice is – just one generation removed from someone my age.

Which brings me to The Pill and contemporary views on birth control. For all intents and purposes, I support anything that gives women reign over their bodies and prevents the situations my mother's and grandmother's generations were put in. What I take issue with is how pregnancy prevention is still considered, by a large segment of our society, a woman's responsibility, although not necessarily a right. And I wonder what a pro-Pill society means for women.

Many women, young and old, view The Pill as a **symbol of personal empowerment** and yet I hear too many women say the reason they're on it is because the men/boys they're with don't like wearing condoms. Are women being empowered by doing what's right for their own bodies or are they simply trying to avoid "inconveniencing" men? Add on the fact that The Pill does nothing to prevent the spread and contraction of STDs, to which women are much more vulnerable than men, as well as the plethora of unfavorable side effects it can have, and The Pill doesn't seem like such a blessing, which is unfortunate since the trend in the United States seems to be making The Pill the norm. According to the most recent government data, from 2002, more than eight in ten American women ages 15 to 44 had taken oral contraceptives at some point in their lives. And stories of teenage girls going on The Pill as soon they hit puberty are widespread. I can only imagine this thrills pharmaceutical companies, for which oral contraceptives is a multi-billion dollar business. This makes me a little skeptical. Anytime there's lots of money to be made, I always wonder about the costs. And who bears them.

For all the women who love The Pill, I'm glad. I'm glad it's had a positive impact. For me it's had the opposite. Over the course of my adult life, I've been on ten different birth control pills – from Depo to Ortho to Yasmin. And every time it's had some type of adverse effect on me – from horrible mood swings to extreme lethargy to a libido without a pulse. I know I'm not the only one who has experienced or experiences this, and this is what I find disconcerting. What if an entire generation of women grow up only knowing nothing else? I also wonder if one of the reasons The Pill is effective in preventing pregnancy is because it's makes women not want to have sex. I know too many couples (*too too many*) where lack of sex is a primary issue in the relationship. I'm not blaming The Pill here, but I can't imagine it helps the situation. Women's lib shouldn't come at the cost of a woman's libido.

I don't have a universal alternative solution for The Pill. For me, it's meant the guy I'm with has had to take an active role in making sure *our actions* don't create any unwanted

consequences. It's meant either using condoms or using the pullout method (an option more viable now that **Plan B** can be obtained over the counter). It's been 100% effective in my relationships but it requires my partner have a sense of his own body and what he's doing and it also requires trust, which, in my opinion, are essential components of a healthy sexual relationship.

I don't know what the future holds for birth control and reproduction. Maybe it will be an ultrasound procedure for males (like the one **being developed at the University of North Carolina**) or maybe it will be an **artificial uterus**. I do know that no matter what technological advances we make, it's very much a social issue that's at the center of debate in government, politics, and business. And it will probably continue to be. But it's a topic that needs to be talked about openly and explored, by both men and women. Relegating it as a women-only responsibility, considering it a topic inappropriate to talk about in public forums, and allowing any one body of thought to dictate the terms, doesn't do anybody any good.

POSTED ON MARCH 25, 2010 - BY **AMY SENGER**

## THE STUDS OF SXSW INTERACTIVE 2010

### CONFERENCES

In a delayed response to The Frisky's "**The Studs of SXSW**" post which unceremoniously omits the fellas of Southby's Interactive to solely highlight the Music-makers, I decided to pay tribute to the nerds of Southby with my own personal list of men who are not only worth watching, but who are worth looking at:

- **Mark Hendrickson**, founder of **Plancast**, the much talked-about and utilized service at Southby this year which can be most easily described as "Foursquare for the future." Mark talks to TECHcocktail's Frank Gruber **here** where you can easily see why I put him at the top of the list.
- **Andy McAfee**, HBS professor turned MIT scientist turned best-selling author turned stand-up comedian. Andy somehow packed the house for an early Monday morning session (that means the nerds had been socializing for at least three days straight!) with a talk on **Corporate America**. Andy is not technically a stand-up comedian but he managed to keep the audience not only awake, but engaged and wanting more.
- **Jesse Thomas**, also known as the guy who spells his name with a number, Jess3's work was plastered everywhere at Southby. The creative force behind this **State of the Internet** masterpiece, you can expect big things to come from Jesse in the future.
- **Aaron Vest**, the man behind the force known as **Queen of Spain**, or simply Erin Kotecki-Vest's husband. Mr. Vest entertained followers by tweeting the experience of "getting his sxsw cherry popped." In no way does he appear emasculated by having a strong, successful woman as a wife. Rather the opposite.
- **Steven, the Robotchampion**, Mandzik, aka the man who makes me compost stuff and wash out and reuse my yogurt containers. A true nerd's nerd, the Robot led what I consider one of the best talks at Southby, a very interactive discussion on **Zero Waste**.

So while **Gary Vee** still "brought the thunder", while **Robert Scoble** continued his thought-provoking tech musings, and while **Pete Cashmore** is still just as good-looking in person as he is in his Mashable avatar, I think it's important to recognize new talent and give credit where credit is due. Thanks guys.

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by **amy senger** on March 19, 2010

### She's Geeky...It's Personal

by **amy senger** on October 25, 2009

### The Gov 2.0 Showdown

by **amy senger** on September 11, 2009

### The Weavers

by **amy senger** on September 7, 2009

### The Dance of Community Management

by **amy senger** on July 9, 2009

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